



U.S. Department of Justice

**Federal Bureau of Investigation**  
Washington, D.C. 20535

[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

FOIPA Request No.: [REDACTED]  
Subject: MERCHANT, MADELINE  
GWYNNE

Dear [REDACTED]

Records responsive to your request were previously processed under the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act. Enclosed is one CD containing 12 pages of previously processed documents and a copy of the Explanation of Exemptions. This release is being provided to you at no charge.

Additional records potentially responsive to your subject may exist. Please submit a new FOIA request if you would like the FBI to conduct a search of the indices to our Central Records System.

Submit requests by mail or fax to – Work Process Unit, 170 Marcel Drive, Winchester, VA 22602, fax number (540) 868-4997.

For your information, Congress excluded three discrete categories of law enforcement and national security records from the requirements of the FOIA. See 5 U.S.C. § 552(c) (2006 & Supp. IV (2010)). This response is limited to those records that are subject to the requirements of the FOIA. This is a standard notification that is given to all our requesters and should not be taken as an indication that excluded records do, or do not, exist.

For questions regarding our determinations, visit the [www.fbi.gov/foia](http://www.fbi.gov/foia) website under "Contact Us." The FOIPA Request Number listed above has been assigned to your request. Please use this number in all correspondence concerning your request. Your patience is appreciated.

You may file an appeal by writing to the Director, Office of Information Policy (OIP), United States Department of Justice, Suite 11050, 1425 New York Avenue, NW, Washington, D.C. 20530-0001, or you may submit an appeal through OIP's FOIAonline portal by creating an account on the following web site: <https://foiaonline.regulations.gov/foia/action/public/home>. Your appeal must be postmarked or electronically transmitted within sixty (60) days from the date of this letter in order to be considered timely. If you submit your appeal by mail, both the letter and the envelope should be clearly marked "Freedom of Information Act Appeal." Please cite the FOIPA Request Number assigned to your request so that it may be easily identified.

Sincerely,

David M. Hardy  
Section Chief,  
Record/Information  
Dissemination Section  
Records Management Division

Enclosure(s)

## **EXPLANATION OF EXEMPTIONS**

### **SUBSECTIONS OF TITLE 5, UNITED STATES CODE, SECTION 552**

- (b)(1) (A) specifically authorized under criteria established by an Executive order to be kept secret in the interest of national defense or foreign policy and (B) are in fact properly classified to such Executive order;
- (b)(2) related solely to the internal personnel rules and practices of an agency;
- (b)(3) specifically exempted from disclosure by statute (other than section 552b of this title), provided that such statute (A) requires that the matters be withheld from the public in such a manner as to leave no discretion on issue, or (B) establishes particular criteria for withholding or refers to particular types of matters to be withheld;
- (b)(4) trade secrets and commercial or financial information obtained from a person and privileged or confidential;
- (b)(5) inter-agency or intra-agency memorandums or letters which would not be available by law to a party other than an agency in litigation with the agency;
- (b)(6) personnel and medical files and similar files the disclosure of which would constitute a clearly unwarranted invasion of personal privacy;
- (b)(7) records or information compiled for law enforcement purposes, but only to the extent that the production of such law enforcement records or information ( A ) could reasonably be expected to interfere with enforcement proceedings, ( B ) would deprive a person of a right to a fair trial or an impartial adjudication, ( C ) could reasonably be expected to constitute an unwarranted invasion of personal privacy, ( D ) could reasonably be expected to disclose the identity of confidential source, including a State, local, or foreign agency or authority or any private institution which furnished information on a confidential basis, and, in the case of record or information compiled by a criminal law enforcement authority in the course of a criminal investigation, or by an agency conducting a lawful national security intelligence investigation, information furnished by a confidential source, ( E ) would disclose techniques and procedures for law enforcement investigations or prosecutions, or would disclose guidelines for law enforcement investigations or prosecutions if such disclosure could reasonably be expected to risk circumvention of the law, or ( F ) could reasonably be expected to endanger the life or physical safety of any individual;
- (b)(8) contained in or related to examination, operating, or condition reports prepared by, on behalf of, or for the use of an agency responsible for the regulation or supervision of financial institutions; or
- (b)(9) geological and geophysical information and data, including maps, concerning wells.

### **SUBSECTIONS OF TITLE 5, UNITED STATES CODE, SECTION 552a**

- (d)(5) information compiled in reasonable anticipation of a civil action proceeding;
- (j)(2) material reporting investigative efforts pertaining to the enforcement of criminal law including efforts to prevent, control, or reduce crime or apprehend criminals;
- (k)(1) information which is currently and properly classified pursuant to an Executive order in the interest of the national defense or foreign policy, for example, information involving intelligence sources or methods;
- (k)(2) investigatory material compiled for law enforcement purposes, other than criminal, which did not result in loss of a right, benefit or privilege under Federal programs, or which would identify a source who furnished information pursuant to a promise that his/her identity would be held in confidence;
- (k)(3) material maintained in connection with providing protective services to the President of the United States or any other individual pursuant to the authority of Title 18, United States Code, Section 3056;
- (k)(4) required by statute to be maintained and used solely as statistical records;
- (k)(5) investigatory material compiled solely for the purpose of determining suitability, eligibility, or qualifications for Federal civilian employment or for access to classified information, the disclosure of which would reveal the identity of the person who furnished information pursuant to a promise that his/her identity would be held in confidence;
- (k)(6) testing or examination material used to determine individual qualifications for appointment or promotion in Federal Government service the release of which would compromise the testing or examination process;
- (k)(7) material used to determine potential for promotion in the armed services, the disclosure of which would reveal the identity of the person who furnished the material pursuant to a promise that his/her identity would be held in confidence.

## Office Memorandum • UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT

TO : DIRECTOR, FBI

DATE: July 22, 1947

FROM : SAC, EL PASO

SUBJECT: Mrs. GWYNNE M. MERCHANT, Informant  
FLYING OBJECTS IN AIR

Mrs. GWYNNE M. MERCHANT has come to the resident agency at Santa Fe, New Mexico on several occasions to report that she has received information concerning flying objects passing through the air. Some of the reports that she has received concern light objects seen at night which have allegedly been followed by explosions. She advised that one of such objects was reported by FRANK BURTRAM, Forest Ranger, who works near Canjilon, New Mexico. She claims that others were seen near Park View and Tierra Amarilla, New Mexico.

Mrs. MERCHANT called attention to clippings from various newspapers concerning "disc-like" objects seen in New Mexico and other parts of the country.

Mrs. MERCHANT claims to be a student of radio waves and ray forms, and contends that the above mentioned objects may be missiles similar to those appearing over Sweden some time ago.

Mrs. MERCHANT has discussed the above with officials of the Atomic Energy Commission, and has written the Secretary of War and other government officials concerning her theories. Mr. SIDNEY NEWBURGER, Chief of Security and Intelligence for the A.E.C., has advised that officials at Los Alamos consider Mrs. MERCHANT unreliable and possibly not well balanced mentally. She has mentioned to agents of this office that she was struck by lightning when a child.

On July 15, Mrs. MERCHANT came to the Santa Fe resident agency and advised that she had written to WALTER WINCHELL, promising him a story in connection with the "flying discs."

The foregoing information is being submitted to the Bureau, inasmuch as Mrs. MERCHANT has written to several government officials and Mr. WINCHELL.

62-0-3594c  
FTM:GHRECORDED  
INDEXED

38

EX 31

62-83874-37  
EX-13  
JUL 23 1947

Return  
Made  
Adm. Serv. Div.  
252

RF

OFFICE OF DIRECTOR  
FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION  
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

September 8, 1947

The attached was sent to  
the Director by Walter  
Winchell.

The notations appearing  
thereon read:

"Ack & F.B.I."

"Please excuse haste - Trying to  
make airmail west."

Attachment

mt

Mr. Tolson \_\_\_\_\_  
Mr. E. A. Tamm \_\_\_\_\_  
Mr. Clegg \_\_\_\_\_  
Mr. Glavin \_\_\_\_\_  
Mr. Ladd \_\_\_\_\_  
Mr. Nichols \_\_\_\_\_  
Mr. Rosen \_\_\_\_\_  
Mr. Tracy \_\_\_\_\_  
Mr. Carson \_\_\_\_\_  
Mr. Egan \_\_\_\_\_  
Mr. Gurnea \_\_\_\_\_  
Mr. Harbo \_\_\_\_\_  
Mr. Hendon \_\_\_\_\_  
Mr. Jones \_\_\_\_\_  
Mr. Pennington \_\_\_\_\_  
Tele. Room \_\_\_\_\_  
Mr. Nease \_\_\_\_\_  
Miss Holmes \_\_\_\_\_  
Miss Gandy \_\_\_\_\_

RECORDED

INDEXED

Bureau files fail to reflect any  
record on a Mrs. Madeline Gwynne  
Merchant, the writer of the attached  
letter.

15 SEP 16 1947

EX-103  
51 SEP 22 1947

Mrs. Madeline Gwynne Merchant

Box 263, Santa Fe, New Mexico

July 13, 1947

Mr. Walter Winchell,  
% Postmaster,  
Los Angeles, Calif.

Dear Mr. Winchell:

*ACK*  
*7/21/47*  
*Please excuse haste - trying to make airmail*  
~~This~~ The enclosed letter deals with what are being called "discs."

You are not to mention the contents of this letter over the air, nor to any individual other than officials of the War Dep't., members of the FBI, or an American whose patriotism would rank with your own, and who might donate \$10,000 or more for the purpose of my continuing the collection of field data concerning "discs," while time may remain in which to do so.

I have had respectful attention from the following persons: (~~But no checks, nor expense accounts even.~~)

Col. Herbert C. Gee, Comm. Officer,  
Los Alamos Atomic Project,  
Los Alamos, N.M.

Maj. Sidney Newburger, Security Official,  
Los Alamos Atomic Project,  
Los Alamos, N.M.

Mr. Willard Zimmer, Military Intelligence,  
P.O. Box 681,

Santa Fe, N.M.

62-83874-76

ENCLOSURE

(2)

Francis Finley, Agent-in-Charge,  
Federal Bureau of Investigation, (Phone 1366)  
Santa Fe, N.M.

Gen. S.R. Brennault,  
Ass't. to LT. Gen. Nathan F. Twining,  
AAF Materiel Command,  
Washington, D.C.

Col. Zumwalt,  
Ass't to Colonel Bunker, Comm. Off.  
Kirtland Field,  
Albuquerque, N.M.

Gen. Patrick Hurley, (Former Ambassador to China,)  
1210 Shoreham Bld'g. (Also Santa Fe, N.M.)  
Washington, D.C.

And through the courtesy of Gen. Patrick Hurley,  
a letter from Sec. of War Robert Patterson, War Dep't, Washington, D.C.

All were highly interested, appreciative, with the  
general trend of contacts being, "This is fine. Go right ahead."

My point in writing you is to raise some money to  
proceed with. No budgets seemed to allow for the unexpected, elusive  
"discs."

Sen. Carl Hatch, D-N.M., U.S. Senate, Washington, D.C.  
has been contacted by mail for an appropriation, but even if this  
only requires one more week, it may be too late.

You may contact any of the above listed persons to  
verify my contacts (excuse repetition word contact) during the past  
four months. In other words, I began reporting directly to  
Dr. Norris Bradbury, Scientific Head of Los Alamos, and Colonel Gee,  
et al, some time ago that this type aerial "disc" was a reality.

This material was considered confidential, and still is.

I have been asked by Colonel Gee not to speak any further than material which has been published in the press. And I have chosen simply not to speak at all, except to a source which I consider might further my own work.

If you ask of the above persons, to ascertain whether or not I have made serious, materially valuable contributions, which may indicate much scientifically..... and which, if action can be continued soon enough, may a little later save our nation much.... please make inquiries quietly, and as promptly as convenient.

I must ask you not to speculate, even to yourself... but simply to act.

Do not mention in any manner, until release by the War Dep't, even the receipt of this letter, except to the above persons, or proper government officials there. Or, to one whom you know will make a donation.

Perhaps your savest bet would be simply to telephone the FBI there, and let them telephone Francis Finley here for vérification.

I promise you an exclusive, behind the scenes story when, and if, the War Dep't releases the material nationally. Meantime, your action now may save your own life, and that of others who may have wondered what a "disc" is.

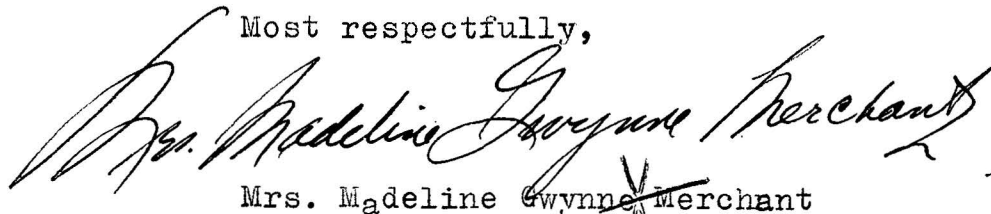
Rest assured I have all the proper scientific and governmenta<sup>1</sup> contacts needed..... all I need is the wherewithall. I have the proper background to discuss the subject, secure the further field

data I now need, explain it technically, and secure proper action, provided I am given the means to do so.

I regret that I cannot be more specific now, but duty to country rests above.

I have met before with the mental reaction, "What? A woman handling this type material? " And my signature below will probably evoke the same response from you. So I assure you, yes, it is a woman who is coming in with the information which men have gone out to seek. And doing the proper thing about it.

Most respectfully,



Mrs. Madeline Gwynne Merchant

cc/

P.S. Am a former newspaper person, and very proud of it.  
Am 39, but dress and feel some younger.

Again, I must ask you not to mention even the town from which this letter comes, as you may be endangering lives to so so. Simply ascertain my contributions, get some money to me, and wait. (Francis Finley ~~himself~~ would give me a gas budget, if he were not so close himself.)



## Office Memorandum • UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT

TO : DIRECTOR, FBI

January 31, 1949  
DATE:

FROM : SAC, SAN ANTONIO

SUBJECT: PROTECTION OF VITAL INSTALLATIONS  
BUREAU FILE # 65-58300~~CONFIDENTIAL~~*2300*  
*declassified*  
*2010*  
*8/31/77*  
*AM*

At recent Weekly Intelligence Conferences of G-2, ONI, OSI, and F.B.I., in the Fourth Army Area, Officers of G-2, Fourth Army have discussed the matter of "Unidentified Aircraft" or "Unidentified Aerial Phenomena" otherwise known as "Flying Discs", "Flying Saucers", and "Balls of Fire". This matter is considered top secret by Intelligence Officers of both the Army and the Air Forces.

It is well known that there have been during the past two years reports from the various parts of the country of the sighting of unidentified aerial objects which have been called in newspaper parlance "flying discs" and "flying saucers". The first such sightings were reported from Sweden, and it was thought that the objects, the nature of which was unknown, might have originated in Russia.

In July 1948 an unidentified aircraft was "seen" by an Eastern Airlines Pilot and Co-Pilot and one or more passengers of the Eastern Airlines Plane over Montgomery, Alabama. This aircraft was reported to be of an unconventional type without wings and resembled generally a "rocket ship" of the type depicted in comic strips. It was reported to have had windows; to have been larger than the Eastern Airlines plane, and to have been traveling at an estimated speed of 2700 miles an hour. It appeared out of a thunderhead ahead of the Eastern Airlines plane and immediately disappeared in another cloud narrowly missing a collision with the Eastern Airlines plane. No sound or air disturbance was noted in connection with this appearance.

During the past two months various sightings of unexplained phenomena have been reported in the vicinity of the A.E.C. Installation at Los Alamos, New Mexico, where these phenomena now appear to be concentrated. During December 1948 on the 5th, 6th, 7th, 8th, 11th, 13, 14th, 20th and 28th sightings of unexplained phenomena were made near Los Alamos by Special Agents of the Office of Special Investigation; Airline Pilots; Military Pilots, Los Alamos Security Inspectors, and private citizens. On January 6, 1949, another similar object was sighted in the same area.

Dr. LINCOLN LA PAZ, a Meteorologist of some note, has been generally in charge of the observations near Los Alamos, attempting to learn characteristics of the unexplained phenomena.

Up to this time little concrete information has been obtained.

JEJ:md

SI-100-7545

cc: DEL Paso (2)  
Dallas (2)  
Houston (2)

RECORDED - 133

Little Rock (2)  
Oklahoma City (2)

FBI  
43 MAR 16 1949

ORIGINAL FILED IN

DIRECTOR, FBI

1/31/49

There have been day time sightings which are tentatively considered to possibly resemble the exhaust of some type of jet propelled object. Night-time sightings have taken the form of lights usually described as brilliant green, similar to a green traffic signal or green neon light. Some reports indicated that the light began and ended with a red or orange flash. Other reports have given the color as red, white, blu-white, and yellowish green. Trailing lights sometimes observed are said to be red. The spectrum analysis of one light indicates that it may be a copper compound of the type known to be used in rocket experiments and which completely disintegrates upon explosion, leaving no debris. It is noted that no debris has ever been known to be located anywhere resulting from the unexplained phenomena.

Recent observations have indicated that the unidentified phenomena travel at a rate of speed estimated at a minimum of three miles per second and a maximum of twelve miles per second, or a mean calculated speed of seven and one-half miles a second, or 27,000 miles an hour. Their reported course indicates that they travel on an East - West line with probability that they approach from the Northern Quadrant, which would be the last stage of the great circle route if they originated in Russia. When observed they seem to be in level flight at a height of six to ten miles and thus traveling on a tangent to the earth's surface. They occasionally dip at the end of the path and on two occasions a definite vertical change in path was indicated. These phenomena have not been known to have been sighted, however, at any intermediate point between Russia and Los Alamos, but only at the end of the flight toward the apparent "target", namely, Los Alamos.

In every case but one the shape of the objects has been reported as round in a point of light with a definite area to the light's source. One report gives a diamond shape; another indicates that trailing lights are elongated. The size is usually compared to one-fourth the diameter of the full moon, and they have also been compared in size to a basketball with trailing lights the size of a baseball.

On no occasion has sound been associated directly with the phenomena, but unexplained sounds have been reported from Los Alamos. On two occasions reports have been received of the sighting of multiple units.

Some nine scientific reasons are stated to exist which indicated that the phenomena observed are not due to meteorites. The only conclusions reached thus far are that they are either hitherto unobserved natural phenomena or that they are man made. No scientific experiments are known to exist in this country which could give rise to such phenomena.

DIRECTOR, FBI

1/31/49

Mrs. MADELINE GWYNNE MERCHANT was the subject of a letter from the Atlanta office to the Bureau dated August 10, 1948, entitled, "MADELINE GWYNNE MERCHANT; INFORMATION CONCERNING."

She has written many letters to Military Authorities concerning her theories regarding Atomic Energy. She has generally been considered unreliable and possibly mentally unbalanced. She, however, has submitted to Military authorities the only theory thus far known that has any credibility at all, namely, that the lights are manifestations of cosmic rays which are directed toward a specific point. She further theorizes that such rays may interfere with the ignition of motors and may account for various unexplained air crashes.

The above is submitted for the confidential information of the Bureau and offices to which copies of this letter are directed so that these offices may evaluate any such reports they may have received or may receive in the future.

It is noted that the Fourth Army has the responsibility of protecting vital installations at Los Alamos, New Mexico, Sandia Base, New Mexico, and Camp Hood, Texas. Any information developed should be expeditiously transmitted to G-2, Fourth Army.

It is further noted that G-2 and O.S.I. are actively engaged in investigating this matter. No investigation is being conducted by this office.

62-83894-145

COPY

COPY

COPY

1515 - 9th St.

Wichita Falls, Texas

Aug. 5, 1948 -

Publisher,  
Atlanta Journal,  
Atlanta, Georgia.

Dear Sir:

On July 25, 1948, I mailed a letter enclosing .35 cents in coin and an airmail self-addressed envelop to your circulation department, asking for tear sheets of the Atlanta Journal containing the stories on a "strange" or "mysterious" aircraft seen near Montgomery, Alabama, July 24, 1948, by two pilots, Cap't C. S. Chiles and John B. Whitted, of the Eastern Air Lines.

These have not arrived. I asked for two copies each of the stories.

Enclosed is an additional .35 cents, and another stamped self-addressed envelop. Will you kindly see that your circulation department complies with this simple request?

I assure you that my interest in the above stories is prompted by interest in the defense of our country, and you are hereby given my fullest permission to turn this letter requesting the copies of the stories over to the FBI, should you wish.

Thanking you very kindly, I am,

Sincerely,

/s/ Mrs. Madeline Gwynne Merchant  
Mrs. Madeline Gwynne Merchant

cc/Agent-In-Charge  
Federal Bureau of Investigation  
Atlanta, Georgia

The incident was, I believe, an important one. And though I have already made reports to Maj. Sidney Newburger of Los Alamos and to General Handy, I would appreciate the fuller newspaper stories appearing in the press there. Thanking you kindly, I am,

Sincerely,

/s/ Mrs. Madeline Gwynne Merchant  
Mrs. Madeline Gwynne Merchant

62-53894-145

COPY

COPY

COPY

1515 - 9th St.

Wichita Falls, Texas

Aug. 5, 1948

Agent-In-Charge,  
Federal Bureau of Investigation,  
Atlanta, Georgia.

Dear Sir:

Enclosed is a carbon of a letter requesting tear sheets of the unusual aircraft seen near Montgomery, Alabama, July 24, 1948, stories concerning which were carried by AP and UP, originating in Atlanta.

It may have been oversight by someone in the circulation dep't of the Atlanta Journal, or it may have been "alarm" that a woman would be requesting this type of information, even though it was published, and thereby open information.

Even though I cannot identify myself to the Atlanta Journal publisher or staff, I can to you. I have worked independently on the problem of aerial missiles, of which I believe this was an example, with all my data going directly to officials and members of the security office of the Atomic Energy Comm., Los Alamos Atomic Project, Los Alamos, N.M., and to high members of the War Department, including Gen. Thomas T. Handy, Fourth U. S. Army Commander, Ft. Sam Houston, Tex., head of this U. S. Army district.